

PREPARED REMARKS OF COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN
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Thank you, Mr. Everett for such a warm introduction. It is a privilege for me to join PPI (The Progressive Policy Institute) and GCBPP (Georgetown University's Center for Business and Public Policy) this morning to focus on a topic that is, unfortunately, both timely and relevant.

I use the word "unfortunately" in this context, because I find it troubling that in an era of great technological disruption and stratospheric growth in the communications space, where monumental breakthroughs in health care and agri-business abound, and innovative solutions for people, businesses and governments domestically and globally are connecting, improving and transforming lives in places previously discounted, that too many of our citizens remain stuck on the wrong side of the opportunities divide. The policy memo that frames today's discussions highlights the workforce progress being made in the technology field in particular, for two under-represented groups in the technology space and, as any good research product does, forces us to question a few of our most inveterate positions.

But unless you choose to ignore the obvious, you must accept the memo's subtitle as fact: that what we have before us is a good news, bad news story.

Hopefully, you will not be disturbed that the conversation last night and the policy memo's focus have emboldened me to tailor some of my reflections from my vantage point as a woman, an African American, a southerner, and a product of public grade schools and state-supported institutions of higher learning. However, I must confess that my professional view is primarily shaped through the lens of a policymaker, charged with advancing the public interest in the communications sector.

The finding of this work product, that is both surprising and perplexing, is that African Americans and Latinos have fared better than conventionally thought in tech, and women have it worse.

And as the *only* woman to date to have led this nation's expert agency on communications technology, it comes as no surprise to me that women -- 47 percent of the workforce -- represent just 25 percent of those who are college-educated employed in tech and that progress for them [for us] remains slow.

You may have come across two stories in the "you-just-can't-make-this-up" category that may, in part, explain some of this:

That comment from that Nobel Prize-winning biochemist in London, about what he feels about fellow female scientists and how they cry if you criticize them;

And the Chairman of one of Wall Street's largest investment banks, suggesting that Senator Elizabeth Warren "doesn't fully understand the global banking system." That Chair even offered to explain things to the former Harvard Law professor, who headed the National Bankruptcy Review Commission and Congressional Oversight Panel for the Troubled Asset Relief Program... you know, that Elizabeth Warren.

So it is safe to say, women regardless of credentials, still face all sorts of barriers and the fact that these are disproportionately higher in the tech sector, is troubling, telling, but unfortunately, not shocking. That college-educated African Americans and Latinos have benefitted greatly from the recent tech jobs boom, and that tech-driven investment and innovation is a potent force for narrowing wealth and income gaps, is surprising and great news to me, but I highlight this indisputable fact: that gaps remain and that

potential cited in the report, to narrow those gaps, will never be fully realized without some good old-fashioned, low-to-no-tech, person to person intervention and shifts in policies and practices when it comes to recruitment, retention and the funding of concepts and projects.

The National Urban League quantifies many of these systemic gaps with something they call the National Equality Index. The standard for equality is, you have guessed it, 100 percent. In economics, the index stands at 55.8 percent.

On social justice front, it is 60.6 percent. Both indices actually improved over the past year, but they affirm how much is left to do.

Now we must note that there is more than one impressive woman with a high-profile position in tech. Remember, the call to “lean in” a couple of years ago, helped spark a national discussion. Yet more than one of these same female, has faced significant criticism from other women, who felt that their collective challenges, particularly in the area of family support and economic access, are not adequately addressed.

So while these national and international role models matter and matter greatly, what the report affirms is how much local figures matter, since the overwhelming majority of tech jobs are actually being created outside of Silicon Valley.

Most college drop-outs will not attain billionaire status by their 30th birthday, but this should not discourage any of us from influencing and amplifying the value of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics through effective messaging and the use of influential apostles young people can relate to.

The White House is using its bully pulpit to endorse ubiquitous and affordable broadband for communities large and small, and promoting initiatives like TechHire. But that is not enough.

Google welcomed Rev. Jesse Jackson to its latest shareholder meeting, where they discussed the company’s \$150 million diversity strategy, and ways to build on initiatives like their plan to embed engineers at historically black colleges and universities like Howard and Hampton. Encouraged by civil rights groups and other organizations, companies like Facebook, Apple and Intel have also stepped up with significant dollars for pro-diversity efforts. But that is not enough.

Efforts to expand the pipeline in these ways are only part of the solution. Each of us has the ability to identify, challenge and stamp out barriers and craft common-sense solutions to close chronic opportunity gaps, that is, if we agree that it is worth it.

You are here, so I am going to bet that you think that this is an effort worth undertaking.

The media could do more. It can highlight, profile, challenge and expose those who are striving to break molds and expose others who may be standing in the way.

Community organizations and religious institutions could do more, by directly supporting, encouraging and embracing those whose journey may be the most difficult, because as we know, the tech road is not easiest for most to travel.

Our schools could do more, for research has shown, that female students and others from under-represented groups who start out interested in tech jobs, are likely to face discouragement from teachers and employers at key points in their educational and professional careers.

Government agencies, NGOs and research institutions could do more, by being data driven and enablers of smart regulation... regulation that has the right touch... balanced regulation that encourages

the most robust levels of innovation, investment and competition, while ensuring the proper level of consumer protection so that the public will not fear, but be willing to embrace all of the promises and benefits technology has to offer.

To encourage job-creating, life-altering opportunities, we not only need open networks, we need them to be fast, affordable and accessible.

A central plank of the FCC's agenda to spur innovation and job creation across the broadband ecosystem is spectrum policy. According to PPI's Michael Mandel, the mobile app economy has created more than 750,000 U.S. jobs, and, as this audience knows, spectrum is the oxygen that sustains mobile innovation. The Commission has been advancing a number of initiatives to make more spectrum available, including our recent auction using new spectrum sharing rules and technologies.

Since 2010, I have also been calling on the Commission to establish innovative and legally sustainable approaches for greater participation by new entrants and small businesses in the communications industry. The Commission is working to update our designated entity rules, so that small businesses have the flexibility needed to secure financing and the impetus to develop new business models to effectively compete in an increasingly consolidated wireless market.

The common denominator in all of this, however, is access to the Internet. It is a pre-requisite if you ever hope to get a job because most companies require that you apply on-line. If you qualify for government benefits, in many states, you can only apply on-line. Increasingly, careers and skills call for some level of digital literacy, yet in 2015, roughly 10 million of our fellow Americans live in areas where wired broadband service is not available. They could not subscribe to broadband in the home with a non-mobile device even if they wanted to. They are living in digital badlands. Over the next six years, the FCC will disburse \$11 billion through the Connect America Fund to support infrastructure build-out in unserved rural areas, to address this divide. But even that is not enough.

There are tens of millions of Americans with access, who do not subscribe. Altogether, that number stands at almost 30 percent when it comes to wired broadband and African-Americans and Latinos disproportionately find themselves in this number. The number one barrier to connectivity: affordability.

Congress charged the FCC with ensuring that all Americans, including low-income consumers and those in rural and high-cost areas, have affordable access to advanced telecommunications and information services. I believe that this agency, no... I believe that all of *us*, have fallen short of this directive.

But the one way where we can more directly address this effectively, is through the only Universal Service program established to bridge the communications affordability gap. However, in the platinum age of innovation and investment, the Lifeline program, established in 1985 under President Reagan, has not been updated in its 30-year history. It remains stuck in an era where leg warmers, stretch stirrup pants, and scrunchies were the fashion craze. It has been frozen in a time warp, when talking on our home telephone tethered to a wall phone jack or sending a letter through the mail were the main means of communicating. Currently, funding for Lifeline directly supports voice only, but tomorrow the FCC has the opportunity to endorse a path, for a rebooted 21st century model.

If launched right, this could be one of the best investments our government ever makes. For \$9.25 a month, qualifying consumers could have a tangible means to improve their lives, find a job, stay in touch with loved ones, enroll and take classes, monitor their health and maintain connection with doctors, engage in their communities, and participate in e-commerce. If done right, the program could bridge chronic divides, and the network effects could be tremendous.

But we must not only must reset and retarget Lifeline's operations, but alter our mindset about this program, our approach to today's tech challenges as well as all other persistent divides that prevent this nation and its citizens from realizing their fullest potential. I believe that we should view the Lifeline program, as a temporary bridge for those most in need. I believe that we should create a successful, innovative, 21st century program that meets the information and technology needs of those who qualify. And I believe that we should be bold, visionary and firmly state that our goals and objectives are for this program to work so well and be so enabling, that its current subscribers will no longer need it, or any other federal benefits program. New connections to the promise of digital enlightenment and opportunities hold the key to turning lives around. We have seen many examples of this, and now we have the chance to widen the scope of hope and opportunity.

I cannot think of a single, chronic challenge we face today which cannot be improved with technological intervention, but true disruption along with its life-altering benefits, will never be realized in our nation, if the lenses through which we peer are a reflection of the outmoded and exclusive practices of the past.